

# Idaho's Partners In Health

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## Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children 2 to 6 years old

The small tip of the Pyramid shows that it is best to eat less of foods that contain a lot of fat and sugars. These foods contain calories but few vitamins and minerals.

The milk group foods are important for calcium. Children 2 to 6 years old need a total of 2 servings from the milk group each day.

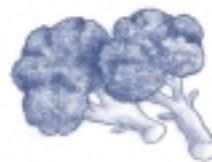
The meat group includes protein sources such as eggs, dry beans and peanut butter, as well as meat, poultry, and fish. These foods are important for protein, iron, and zinc.

Children should eat plenty of foods from the vegetable and fruit groups for vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber.

The grain group forms the base of the Pyramid because the largest number of servings needed each day comes from this food group. Grain products are important for vitamins, minerals, complex carbohydrates, and dietary fiber.



# Child-Size Servings



## What Counts as one Serving?

### GRAIN GROUP

- 1 slice of bread
- 1/2 cup of cooked rice or pasta
- 1/2 cup of cooked cereal
- 1 ounce of ready-to-eat cereal

### VEGETABLE GROUP

- 1/2 cup chopped raw or cooked vegetables
- 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables

### FRUIT GROUP

- 1 piece of fruit or melon wedge
- 3/4 cup of juice
- 1/2 cup of canned fruit
- 1/4 cup of dried fruit

### MILK GROUP

- 1 cup of milk or yogurt
- 2 ounces of cheese

### MEAT GROUP

- 2 or 3 ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish
- 1/2 cup of cooked beans
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons of peanut butter

### FATS AND SWEETS

Limit calories from these.

Children 4 to 6 years old can eat these servings sizes. Offer 2 to 3 year olds less, except for milk.

Young children's appetites can vary widely from day to day, depending on how they are growing and how active they are. As long as they have plenty of energy, are healthy, are growing well, and are eating a variety of foods, they are probably getting enough of the nutrients they need from the foods they eat. If you are concerned about your child eating too much or too little, check with your doctor, WIC, or other healthcare provider.

- Children 2 to 3 years of age need the same variety of foods as 4 to 6 year olds, but may need fewer calories. Offer them smaller amounts.
- A good estimate of a serving for a 2 to 3 year old is about 2/3 of what counts as a regular Food Guide Pyramid serving.
- Children 2 to 6 years old need a total of 2 servings from the milk group each day.
- Younger children often eat small portions. Offering smaller servings and allowing them to ask for more, satisfies their hunger and does not waste food.
- By the time children are 4 years old, they can eat amounts that count as regular Food Guide Pyramid servings eaten by older family members.
- Offer new foods in small "try me" portions – perhaps 1 or 2 tablespoons – let your children ask for more.
- Remember, variety is the key for the whole family. Offer a variety of foods from the five major food groups, and let your children decide how much to eat.

# be Snack- Wise



These ideas work at home or “on the go.”

## SNACKS FROM THE GRAIN GROUP

Cracker stacks — wheat  
crackers with a cheese slice  
Ready-to-eat cereals  
Flavored mini rice cakes or  
popcorn cakes  
Breads of all kinds such as  
multi-grain, rye, white, wheat

Ginger snaps or fig bars  
\*Popcorn  
\*Trail mix ... ready-to-eat cereals  
mixed with raisins or other  
dried fruit  
Graham crackers

## SNACKS FROM THE VEGETABLE GROUP

Vegetable sticks such as carrot\*,  
celery\*, green pepper,  
cucumber, or squash  
\*Celery stuffed with peanut butter

Cherry tomatoes cut in small  
pieces  
Steamed broccoli, green beans,  
or sugar peas with lowfat dip

## SNACKS FROM THE FRUIT GROUP

Apple ring sandwiches  
peanut butter on apple rings  
Tangerine sections

Chunks of banana or pineapple  
Canned fruits packed in juice  
Juice (100%)

## SNACKS FROM THE MILK GROUP

Milk shakes – made with fruit  
and milk  
Cheese slices with thin apple  
wedges

String cheese or individual  
slices of cheese  
Mini yogurt cups

## SNACKS FROM THE MEAT GROUP

Hard cooked eggs (wedges  
or slices)  
Peanut butter spread thin on  
crackers

Bean dip spread thin  
on crackers

\*May cause choking in 2 to 3 year old children.

For ingredients, stock up on simple foods such as peanut  
butter; cheese; whole grain crackers; little bagels; small  
pita breads; non-sugar-coated, ready-to-eat cereals;  
vegetables and fruits.

# Soft Taco Recipe



To make 4 tacos you'll need:

4, 7-inch flour tortillas  
1/2 cup grated mild cheddar cheese  
1 cup shredded lettuce  
1/4 cup taco sauce  
1 cup chopped tomato  
1 15 ½ ounce can or 2 cups  
cooked pinto beans

NOTE: See Kids in Kitchen on back  
cover for ideas on how your children  
can help with this recipe.

Rinse and shred lettuce.

Rinse and chop tomato.

Grate cheese.

Drain canned beans and mash using  
a fork, adding enough taco sauce  
to moisten and form a paste.

Spread the mashed beans on  
flat tortilla.

Top with cheese, lettuce, tomato,  
and taco sauce. Fold in half,  
then cut into two pieces.

No cooking or heating necessary.

# Kids in the Kitchen



Children enjoy helping in the kitchen and often are more willing to eat foods they help prepare. Involve your child in planning and preparing some meals and snacks for the family.

It is important that you give kitchen tasks appropriate for your child's age. Be patient as your child gains new skills at different ages.

## MEAL PREPARATION ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN:

Children have to be shown and taught how to do these activities. Each child has his or her own pace for learning, so give it time and the skills will come.



### 2 YEAR OLDS:

- Wipe table tops
- Scrub vegetables
- Tear lettuce or greens
- Break cauliflower

- Snap green beans
- Wash salad greens
- Play with utensils
- Bring ingredients from one place to another

### 3 YEAR OLDS: Can do what 2 year olds do, plus ...

- Wrap potatoes in foil for baking
- Knead and shape yeast dough
- Pour liquids

- Shake liquids in covered container
- Spread soft spreads
- Place things in trash
- Mix ingredients

### 4 YEAR OLDS: Can do what 2 and 3 year olds do, plus ...

- Peel oranges or hard cooked eggs
- Move hands to form round shape

- Mash bananas using a fork
- Set table
- Cut parsley or green onions with dull scissors

### 5 TO 6 YEAR OLDS: Can do what 2, 3, and 4 year olds do, plus ...

- Measure ingredients

- Use an egg beater
- Cut with blunt knife



When your child is helping you with food preparation, don't forget cleanliness. Wash hands using soap and warm running water before and after handling food or utensils to prepare foods.

Expect a few spills. It's a small price to pay for helping your children become comfortable around the kitchen.

SOURCES: Tips for Using the Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children 2 to 6 Years Old, March 1999, United States Department of Agriculture.

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